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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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FITZPATRICK CELLA HARPER & SCINTO 30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA NEW YORK, NY 10112			FISCHER, ANDREW J	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3627	

DATE MAILED: 08/24/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/975,968

Applicant(s)

SHIBA ET AL.

Examiner

Andrew J. Fischer

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 18 June 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4, 41 and 54-60 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4, 41, 54-60 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 8/5/03.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Acknowledgements

1. Applicants' amendment filed June 18, 2004 is acknowledged. Accordingly, claims 1, 3, 4, 41, 54-60 remain pending.
2. Applicants perfection of foreign priority is acknowledged.
3. This Office Action is written in OACS. Because of this, the Examiner is unable to control formatting, paragraph numbering, font, spelling, line spacing, and/or other word processing issues. The Examiner sincerely apologies for these errors.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §112 2nd Paragraph

4. The following is a quotation of the 2nd paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

5. Claims 1, 3, 4, 55, and 58-60 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, 2nd paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

- a. In claim 1, it is unclear if the ordered consumable and the returned consumable are the same consumable or a different consumable.

- b. In claim 3, the phrase "when the user specifies in the data fields that the used consumable is to be returned" is unclear. The phrase does not make grammatical sense.

"A claim must be read in accordance with the precepts of English grammar." *In re Hyatt*, 708 F.2d 712, 714, 218 USPQ 195, 197 (Fed. Cir. 1983). In particular, it is not known if a user is to input a date, or simply check a box.

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c. Claim 55 recites the limitation “the inventive point” in line 1. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim. Applicants are reminded that “semantic indefiniteness of claims is not rendered unobjectionable merely because it *could* have been corrected. [Emphasis in original.]” *Allen Engineering Corp. v. Bartell Industries Inc.*, 299 F.3d 1336, 1349, 63 USPQ2d 1769, 1776 (Fed. Cir. 2002) (citations and quotations omitted).

d. In claim 58, it is unclear if “providing information” is the same information as the information recited earlier, *i.e.* the “user log-in information,” the “result information,” or even some other information.

e. In claim 59, it is unclear if the “data” (in the phrase “allowing the user to input data”) is the same data or different data from the “data” recited in claim 41 (*i.e.* the “transmitting data” as recited in claim 41).

6. The Examiner finds that because particular claims are rejected as being indefinite under 35 U.S.C. §112 2nd paragraph, it is impossible to properly construe claim scope at this time. See *Honeywell International Inc. v. ITC*, 68 USPQ2d 1023, 1030 (Fed. Cir. 2003) (“Because the claims are indefinite, the claims, by definition, cannot be construed.”). However, in accordance with MPEP §2173.06 and the USPTO’s policy of trying to advance prosecution by providing art rejections even though these claim are indefinite, the claims are construed and the art is applied *as much as practically possible*.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. §103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office Action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1, 41, and 56-60, as understood by the Examiner, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Dworkin (U.S. 4,992,940). Dworkin discloses transmitting input screens containing data fields to the terminal (the user fills in the template); setting a flag in memory, the flag reflecting the data input by the user to order consumables and specify the return (the system allows for ordering and returning of goods; the flag is a simple check to see if the information was input into the system properly for *e.g.* an order; transmitting the display data which includes a message (the order); reading status information (*i.e.* to verify that the system received the user's order); and providing the status information to the user (via the terminal).

Dworkin does not directly disclose the claimed content of the transmitted data. However, the missing elements in Dworkin are only found in the nonfunctional descriptive material and are not functionally involved in the steps claimed (*i.e.* the steps of "transmitting display data" or "transmitting input screens" are in no way dependent upon the content of the data).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to substitute the content of Dworkin with any type of content. The nonfunctional descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention over the prior art in terms of patentability because the data does not functionally relate to the steps in the method. See

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In re Gulack, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994). See also MPEP §2106 IV B.

9. Claims 1, 3, 4, 41, 54-60, as understood by the Examiner, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Peterson et. al. (U.S. 6,324,522 B2) (“Peterson”) in view of Mongilio (U.S. 6,463,437). Peterson discloses a typical, web based electronic commerce system for ordering of goods and services over the Internet. Peterson does not directly disclose returning of goods. Mongilio directly teaches using the Internet to return goods.

Therefore it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Peterson as taught by Mongilio to include Mongilio’s ability to return goods. Since both are Internet based, they are easily integratable. Moreover, such a modification would have helped increased sales.

10. Functional recitation(s) using the word “for” or other functional terms (*e.g.* “for display” as recited in claim 1) have been considered but given less patentable weight¹ because they fail to add any steps and are thereby regarded as intended use language. A recitation of the intended use of the claimed invention must result in additional steps. See *Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. v. Ben Venue Laboratories, Inc.*, 246 F.3d 1368, 1375-76, 58 USPQ2d 1508, 1513 (Fed. Cir. 2001) (Where the language in a method claim states only a purpose and intended result, the expression does not result in a manipulative difference in the steps of the claim.).

11. For due process purposes, the Examiner again confirms that Applicants have decided not to be their own lexicographer by indicating and defining claim limitations to have meanings

¹ See *e.g. Gulack*, 217 USPQ at 404, stating that although all limitations must be considered, not all limitations are entitled to patentable weight.

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other than their ordinary and accustomed meanings. To support this position, the Examiner again notes the following factual findings as first expounded in the previous Office Actions.² First, the Examiner has again carefully reviewed the specification and prosecution history and can not locate any lexicographic definition(s). Second, the Examiner finds that not only have Applicants not pointed to definitional statements in their specification or prosecution history, Applicants have also not pointed to a term or terms in a claim with which to draw in those statements.³ Third, after receiving express notice of the Examiner's position that lexicography is *not* invoked⁴ Applicants first response did not point out the "supposed errors" in the Examiner's position regarding lexicography invocation in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) (i.e. Applicants did not argue lexicography *was* invoked). Forth and to be sure of Applicants' intent, the Examiner also notes that Applicants have declined the Examiner's express invitation⁵ to be their own lexicographer. Finally, after receiving express notice of the preceding factual findings and conclusions, Applicants' latest response again fails to point out the supposed errors in the Examiner's position regarding lexicography invocation in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b).

² See the First Non-Final Office Action mailed March 26, 2003, Paper No. 12, Paragraph No. 14; the First Final Office Action mailed September 10, 2003, Paper No. 15, Paragraph No. 13; and the Second Non-Final Office Action mailed February 13, 2004, Paragraph No. 10.

³ "In order to overcome this heavy presumption in favor of the ordinary meaning of claim language, it is clear that a party wishing to use statements in the written description to confine or otherwise affect a patent's scope must, *at the very least*, point to a term or terms in the claim with which to draw in those statements. [Emphasis added.]" *Johnson Worldwide Assocs. v. Zebco Corp.*, 175 F.3d 985, 989, 50 USPQ2d 1607, 1610 (Fed. Cir. 1999).

⁴ See again the Examiner's initial Office Action on the merits, Paper No. 12, Paragraph No. 14.

⁵ *Id.*

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Moreover, Applicants' latest response—while fully considered by the Examiner—does not change the Examiner's conclusion that Applicants have decided not to be their own lexicographer. Therefore (and unless expressly noted otherwise by the Examiner), the heavy presumption in favor of the ordinary and accustomed meaning for claim terminology is confirmed. Accordingly, the claims continue to be interpreted with their "broadest reasonable interpretation," *In re Morris*, 127 F.3d 1048, 1054, 44 USPQ2d 1023, 1027 (Fed. Cir. 1997) and the Examiner continues to rely heavily and extensively on this interpretation.

Response to Arguments

12. Applicants' arguments with respect to claims have been considered but are moot in view of the new grounds of rejection.

Conclusion

13. Applicants' amendment necessitated the new grounds of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP §706.07(a). Applicants are reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however,

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will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

14. The following references are considered pertinent to Applicants' disclosure: Rabb et. al. (U.S. 6,636,899 B1); Ruppelt (U.S. 6,571,236 B1); Wong (U.S. 6,343,275) ; Katayanagi et. al. (U.S. 6,321,983 B1); Rosenweig et. al. (U.S. 6,188,991 B1); Ohmura (U.S. 6,138,149); Ray et. al. (U.S. 6,067,529); Fisher et. al. (U.S. 6,047,264); Cogger et. al. (U.S. 6,032,184); Murray et. al. (U.S. 6,003,773); Purcell (U.S. 5,940,807); Hirst et. al. (U.S. 5,930,553); Porter (U.S. 5,774,053); Furukawa (U.S. 5,506,943); and Mii (U.S. 5,282,127).

15. The following two (2) citations to the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure ("MPEP") apply to this Office Action: MPEP citations to Chapters 100, 200, 500, 600, 700, 1000, 1100, 1300, 1400, 1500, 1700, 1800, 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500, 2600, and 2700 are from the MPEP 8th Edition, Rev. 2, May 2004. All remaining MPEP citations are from MPEP 8th Edition, August 2001.

16. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

17. In accordance with the USPTO's goals of customer service, compact prosecution, and reduction of cycle time, the Examiner has made every effort to clarify his position regarding claim interpretation and any rejections or objections in this application. Furthermore, the

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Examiner has again provided Applicants with notice—for due process purposes—of his position regarding his factual determinations and legal conclusions. The Examiner notes and thanks Applicants for their “Remarks” (beginning on page 7) traversing the Examiner’s positions on various points. If Applicants disagree with any additional factual determination or legal conclusion made by the Examiner in this Office Action whether expressly stated or implied,⁶ the Examiner respectfully reminds Applicants to properly traverse the Examiner’s position(s) in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) in their next properly filed response. By addressing these issues now, matters where the Examiner and Applicants agree can be eliminated allowing the Examiner and Applicants to focus on areas of disagreement (if any) with the goal towards allowance in the shortest possible time. If Applicants have any questions regarding the Examiner’s positions or have other questions regarding this communication or even previous communications, Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Examiner Andrew J. Fischer whose telephone number is (703) 305-0292. If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner’s immediate supervisor, Robert Olszewski, can be reached at (703) 308-5183. The fax number for facsimile responses is now (703) 872-9306.



Andrew J. Fischer
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3627

AJF
August 22, 2004

⁶ *E.g.*, if the Examiner rejected a claim under §103 with two references, although not directly stated, it is the Examiner’s implied position that the references are analogous art.